FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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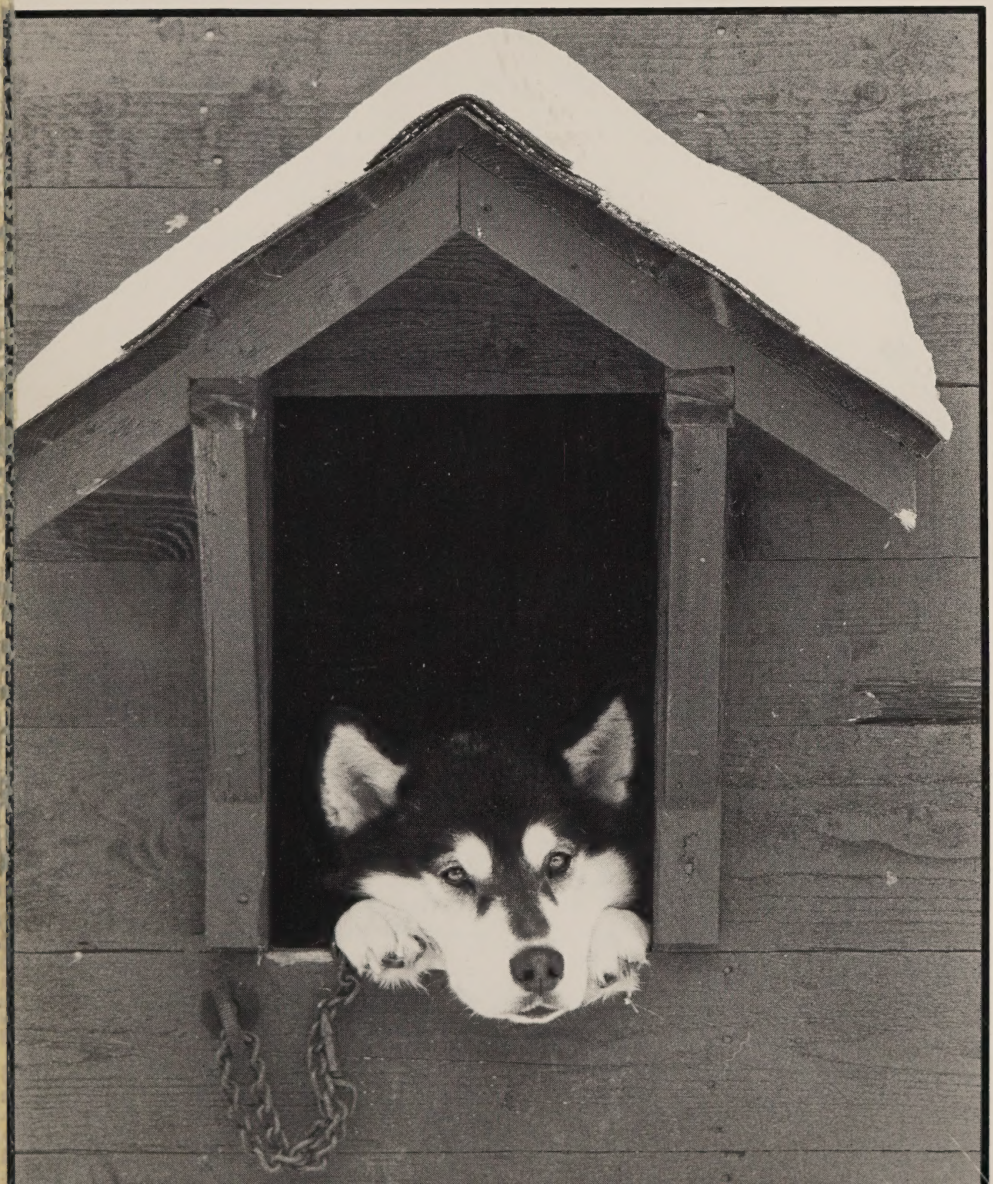

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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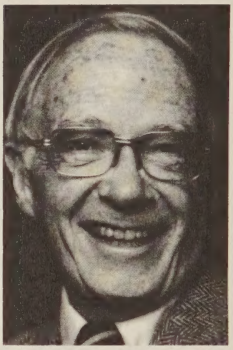
Cover photograph by Kay Danielson.



Glory be to spring for the flowers that bloom and dance in the gardens and fields of the Lord. Let us rejoice in the warm sun and the blue sky and the laughing faces of children as they joyfully celebrate the annual miracle of the Earth's renewal.

Spring, with all its splendors and the miracle of new life, shows us once again that there is peace and beauty within us and all around us, and that every day is a good day to praise and enjoy the goodness of God's creation. Spring reminds us that there is more to the mystery of life than problems and pain and suffering.

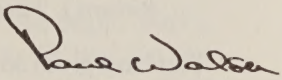
As television, newspapers and magazines relentlessly focus on images and stories of the world's violence, ugliness and hatreds, it is easy to become numb to the daily horrors and forgetful of our inner knowledge that we are all interconnected; all brothers and sisters. We know that in our common humanity we are not different from each other. We all want relief from pain and suffering. We all want to be happy. We all want to love and be loved.

How can we make that knowledge come alive in us and inform all our actions? How can we find our way again to the garden at the heart of our being and water the seeds of love and happiness that are waiting there in the dark to be nourished and raised up by us?

The path of prayer and meditation is the best way I know. Prayer and meditation lead us back to that place where we recognize and reaffirm our inter-connectedness with all beings everywhere. And in that knowledge of our unity and of God's unconditional love for each one of us, we have the power to change the world. With our tremendous capacities for goodness and love and compassion, what blocks us? We know the answer, of course. In the garden of our heart the weeds of anger, fear and destructiveness choke off the seeds of love and prevent us from doing the good that is in us to do.

But every time we pray and meditate, we commit ourselves anew to tending what Thomas Merton called the "hidden garden of love" in our hearts. We commit ourselves anew to the work of clearing the garden of

the malignant growths of apathy and indifference, contempt and pride, that alienate us from our true self, our God and our neighbors. Through prayer and meditation we reconnect with the sacred core of divinity within each of us in an ongoing spiritual practice that, as it shines out into the world, alone can heal this beautiful and suffering planet.



Paul Walsh

To pray is to change. This is a great grace. How good of God to provide a path whereby our lives can be taken over by love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

Richard J. Foster

You have given so much to me.
Give one thing more, a grateful heart.

George Herbert

The more sacred the object of your search, the nearer it is to you.

Søren Kierkegaard

Descend into your heart and you will know at once what you are worth.

Theophan the Recluse

And all the waters
Of all the streams
Sang in my veins
That summer day.

Theodore Roethke

The only true prerequisite for prayer is a broken heart.

Hasidic Wisdom

Compassion—it is a word meaning to suffer with. If we all carry a little of the burden, it will be lightened. If we share in the suffering of the world, then some will not have to endure so heavy an affliction. It evens out. What you do here in New York, in Harrisburg, helps those in China, India, South Africa, Europe, Russia, as well as in the oasis where you are. You may think you are alone. But we are members of one another. We are children of God together.

Dorothy Day

Love draws out love.

Teresa of Avila

Where there is no vision, the people lose restraint.

Proverbs 29.18

A Lesson In Living From Sneaky The Duck

SUSAN SCHNUR

The wisdom of a child turns "bad things" into "good things."

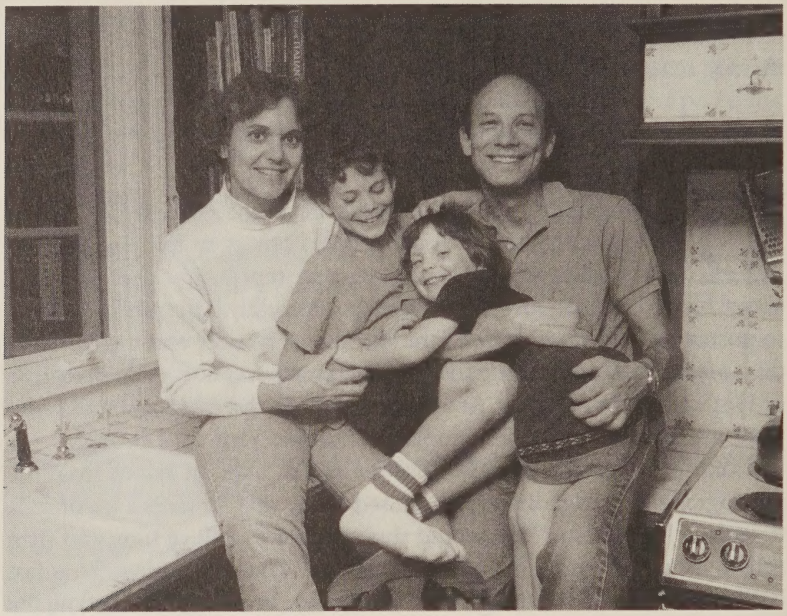
Our synagogue's service on Rosh HaShanah eve begins with a spiritual exercise. Each congregant brings to the *shul* and object, smaller than a breadbox, that represents what was best about his or her last year. These objects—everything from hiking boots to postcards to lawyers' frayed time sheets—sit warmly and mysteriously on a *bima*, or altar, in the middle of the sanctuary, alongside hundreds of High Holy Day candles. At a certain point in the *davening*, those who want are invited to talk contemplatively about what they brought.

I kind of frame this exercise (I'm the rabbi) with an axiom from the photographer Cartier-Bresson. He used to say that "it takes a lot of milk to make a little cream." He would shoot rolls and rolls of film, and then throw away everything but one photograph. This, unfortunately, is not unlike our lives. Soon enough we throw away (because we forget) all the "milk"—but it's a good religious habit to identify, and in that way never lose, our "cream."

In any case, this year, a few weeks before Rosh HaShanah, I overhear my children, Lincoln, age 10, and Anna, age 5, talking about Annie's "cream":

L: What are you putting on the altar, Annie? You have to bring what was best about last year.
A: I'm bringing what was worst.
L: You can't do that.
A: I'm bringing the worst.
L: Nobody brings the worst.
A: But Sneaky the Duck died.
L: (pause) Oh, not Sneaky the Duck! You can't put a dead duck on an altar.
A: I'm drawing a picture of him, and the funeral.
L: (pause) Annie, didn't anything *good* happen to you this year?
A: Not big, like Sneaky.

Susan Schnur is editor of Lilith *magazine and a rabbi in Hopewell, NJ.*



Rabbi Susan Schnur with her family

L: (pause) Well, maybe something good came from Sneaky dying . . . like Mommy says about bad things.
A: Lincoln, Sneaky died! How could something good come from that?
L: Well, how about before Sneaky died? Maybe the best thing from last year was that you had a pet duck before he died.
A: And then he died.

At Sneaky's funeral, obviously a watershed event, Lincoln and Anna cried with an intensity that was heartbreaking. Chanting at the top of their little lungs (I told them that singing helps get the pain out, which I believe), they sobbed, keened, and belted out lyrics.

Later that night Anna said, "You know, Mommy, the vet said Sneaky would live, but he died. How do I know the doctors aren't lying about you?" And then, casually, "I wish everyone died from just one thing, like heart-cancer. That way people wouldn't have to worry about everything—like your lupus."

A month or so later, Annie came to my bedroom with a pencil and paper, and asked if I'd take dictation. She wanted to write a note to her

teacher's aid, she said, whose father had just died. Mrs. Livingston would miss school all week, sitting shiva. Here is Anna's note:

Dear Mrs. Livingston:

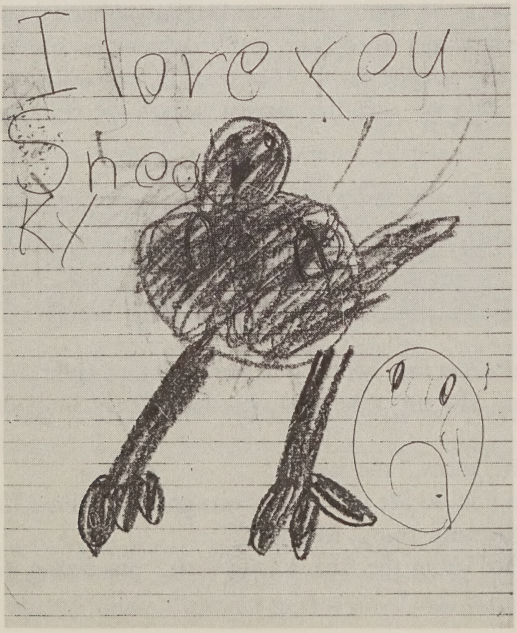
I know it's hard when something you loves dies. This happened to our duck, and I was very sad. I really miss you because you are a great teacher. I think after time passes you get better about it, and you don't think about it so much.

I know if something's very old and it dies, you still want it to get older and older so it doesn't have to die that day. But then when it dies, you'll still wish that you want it to be older. I'm kind of copying off how I feel about Sneaky the Duck.

I know you loved your father very much, but it has to happen some time. I know it's very upsetting, but it does always have to happen, and everyone knows that you love your father very much, and everyone knows that you're upset that your father died.

Love,
Anna Miriam

When the High Holy Days finally arrived, Anna, true to her word, as always, placed a drawing of Sneaky the Duck on the altar. On one side is Sneaky, all crayony and yellow, and Anna crying. On the other is the



duck's grave, brown with four bright flowers, and a row of printed grave markers. "I love you Sneaky," reads one. "I wish you were here." "I will remember you always." "I'm very upset and hope that you love us too." When it was her turn to talk, she said, "Before, when one of our farm animals died, Lincoln always cried, but I never understood. I always felt kind of . . . nothing. But when Sneaky died," she continued, "I understood about it. So this is my best thing of the year," she summed up abruptly, hunkering back down on the rug.

When it was my turn to talk, I lifted up my object: Anna's letter to Mrs. Livingston. I read it outloud, emphasizing the best line—"I'm kind of copying off how I feel about Sneaky the Duck."

As my congregants knew, I had been ill all year, bedbound for months. What they didn't know fully was how challenging each day was for my family. "This last year," I said, "I felt like a failure a lot—as a professional, as a wife, and most painfully, as a mother. It's anguish to feel that your children are taking better care of you than you can take of them.

"Anna's letter," I said, "was my first sign that things would be all right. That my children's anxiety and pain could be transformed into compassion."

We did learn good things this year: like how ashamed you feel when you go to the mall in a wheelchair, and how many people have struggles that are invisible outside the walls of their house, and that it's not just other people who get sick, but regular people get sick, too, like your mother.

We did learn good things this year: like how ashamed you feel when you go to the mall in a wheelchair.

As I tucked Anna into her bottom bunkbed that night, I said, "So tell me, Ms. Anna Miriam, when did you decide that Sneaky's death was good?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said.

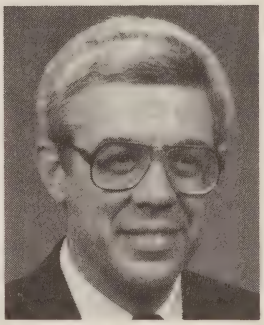
"When did you decide your lupus was good?" offered Lincoln from above. "It's the same thing, Mommy."

And then we lay in the dark a long time, considering a whole new year.

A Walking Backward Meditation

JOHN MIDDLETON

An unplanned turn makes all the difference.



I have long appreciated walking as an opportunity for meditation. It takes me from an indoor, sedentary daily routine into open air and open spaces. It frees me from the telephone and a dozen other interruptions; at least for a time there is relative solitude and silence. It makes room for leisure in a personality bent toward busyness and productivity. And, most importantly, walking expands my attentiveness beyond the narrowness of a desktop to the wideness, richness, and unfailing beauty of creation. Often this is my best opportunity to be present to the Presence—a walking meditation.

Thoreau spoke of walking as "sauntering." He explains that in the Middle Ages there were people who roved about the countryside, asking for charity, under the pretense of going to the Holy Land—or in French, "going *a la Sainte-Terre*." The children finally began saying, "There goes a *Sainte-Terrer*," a Holy-Lander, a person who walks. "Every walk," wrote Thoreau, "is a sort of pilgrimage"; it is a spiritual quest, a way of seeking the Holy Land.

The Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh puts it this way: "When you practice walking meditation, you go for a stroll. You have no purpose or direction in space or time. The purpose of walking meditation is walking meditation itself. Going is important, not arriving . . . each step is life; each step is peace and joy."

One morning, on retreat at Wellspring House of Prayer near Hernando, Mississippi, an odd notion struck me while walking the country

John Middleton is the pastor of First United Methodist Church in Lexington, TN. "I am seeking to be faithful to the ministry of a pastoral contemplative" he writes, "sharing the fruits of a contemplative identity/lifestyle as a pastor of a local congregation."

road. I turned around and began walking backward. That simple turn brought about three immediate physical changes. It slowed me down. It corrected my poor "slouching" posture. (I sometimes think of myself as the woman in Luke's Gospel, bent over for 18 years, unaware of anything except a dusty road.) And it allowed me to see without squinting at the sun and wind.

I beheld a beautiful autumn day. The sun illumined huge trees covered from crown to ground by walls of kudzu. The wind carried leaves gently to earth. Blue jays moved noisily from tree to tree. A breeze stirred the kudzu vines, flipping their silvery sides to the sun. An enjoyment of God's handiwork and a deep prayerful thankfulness unfolded as I made my way down the road backward.

Some might call it a matter of "seeing where you have been." It was in truth more basic: seeing what is. I would surely have missed so much otherwise. The exercise would have been good. I might well have prayed in another fashion. I have no doubt that God would have blessed my

Tom Dunham

intentions for that time. But how oblivious I would have been to the fullness and particularity of that place.

And I wonder, how many blue jays have called for my attention and I never heard? How many leaves have danced on the wind and I never saw? How many autumn days have spent their beauty for me in vain? How many times has the Divine Presence come to life around me, and I never turned to behold?

Toward A Global Ethic

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Representatives of over 125 religions met at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago last summer. Their closing declaration, A Global Ethic, *affirmed their strong belief that a moral consensus can be reached among all religions on the basis of common values and attitudes. But before the world is changed, they emphasized, we must change ourselves.*

Historical experience demonstrates the following: Earth cannot be changed for the better unless we achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life. The possibilities for transformation have already been glimpsed in areas such as war and peace, economy, and ecology, where in recent decades fundamental changes have taken place. This transformation must also be achieved in the area of ethics and values! Every individual has intrinsic dignity and inalienable rights, and each also has an inescapable responsibility for what she or he does and does not do. All our decisions and deeds, even our omissions and failures, have consequences.

Keeping this sense of **responsibility** alive, deepening it and passing it on to future generations, is the special task of religions. We are realistic about what we have achieved in this consensus, and so we urge that the following be observed.

1. A universal **consensus on many disputed ethical questions** (from bio- and sexual ethics through mass media and scientific ethics to economic and political ethics) will be difficult to attain. Nevertheless, even for many controversial questions, suitable solutions should be attainable in the spirit of the fundamental principles we have jointly developed here.
2. In many areas of life a new **consciousness** of ethical responsibility has already arisen. Therefore we would be pleased if as many professions as possible, such as those of physicians, scientists, business people, journalists, and politicians would develop up-to-date **codes of ethics** which would provide specific guidelines for the vexing questions of these particular professions.

This excerpt is taken from A Global Ethic with Commentaries by Hans-Kung and Karl-Josef Kuschel, *published by Continuum. You may order a copy by calling the publisher's toll-free number: 1-800-937-5557.*

3. Above all, we urge the various **communities of faith** to **formulate** their very **specific ethic**: what does each faith tradition have to say, for example, about the meaning of life and death, the enduring of suffering and the forgiveness of guilt, selfless sacrifice and the necessity of renunciation, about compassion and joy? These will deepen, make more specific, the already discernible global ethic.

In conclusion, we appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed. We pledge to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the **awakening** of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking, for **a conversion of the heart**.

Together we can move mountains! Without a willingness to take risks and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation! Therefore we commit ourselves to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially-beneficial, peace-fostering, and Earth-friendly ways of life.

We invite all men and women, whether religious or not, to do the same.

Paul M. Schrock

A Teacher of Wisdom

VINCENT KAVALOSKI

An old man living close to nature teaches a young man to raise questions that have no answers.

"Knowledge divides up the world. Wisdom makes it whole." Venancio, an old shaman of the Makuna people said this, but it could just as well have been the motto of my friend Charlie.

Charlie died some weeks ago. Though I've only come to realize it, he was my true philosophy teacher.

I miss him very much. On a cold, gloomy day like today, we'd be sitting around a crackling fire in his kitchen, smoking our pipes like crazy, smoking Prince Albert tobacco and talking about the way of nature, the Indian way, the way of the deer and the eagles and the coyote. Clouds of smoke swirled and rose, lifting our thoughts to imponderable questions. What is our purpose on this green Earth?

Charlie lived in an old stone cheese factory on the edge of a large park reserve. Some years back he had given up working at a job and retreated to the woods. His way was living close to the rhythm of nature, the mysterious scent of damp earth in springtime, the summer peepers all through the night, living in the rising of the sun, the falling autumn fevered leaves, and the thunk of the ax in a snowy winter's wood.

Charlie spoke often of the old days, when coyotes called up and down the valley and wolves could be heard sometimes, too. He talked, too, about the Indians he'd known, the "first environmentalist's" he called them. "When I was growing up," he once chuckled, "people called them savages. Now that we've destroyed so much of Mother Earth with our 'progress, I wonder who the real savages are"? He laughed often with irony, often with bitter-sweetness, but never from contempt or hate. There was always a merry twinkle in his blue eyes.

In the spring and summer, I'd always see Charlie outside, bare-chested and sun-bronzed, cutting wood or mowing weeds, his snow white beard

A philosophy teacher at Edgewater College in Madison, WI. Vincent Kavaloski is co-director with his wife of the Ecumenical Partnership for Peace & Justice. His most recent book is Dreaming the World Awake.

framing a big smile. He'd lean on his ax or shovel, and listen to our latest worries, news, and reflections, nodding and throwing in some laughter to leaven the mix.

Sometimes he was making his rough, beautiful wooden picnic tables. He always talked about selling them, but somehow, whenever one was admired by a neighbor, it always ended up being a gift.

After talking with Charlie, I'd always feel better—lifted up somehow, like those red-tailed hawks on the morning updraft. From the hawk's lofty perspective, the world looked lovely, alive, *whole*. Life would seem good again, simple, deep and good. My worries would seem to fade into smoke.

Charlie said the only church he went to anymore was the one without walls, because he didn't think the Great Spirit wanted to be hemmed-in by walls. How could I disagree?

A few days after Charlie's death, his wife Grace pressed something into my hand as we hugged, saying, "Charlie wanted you to have this." It was a pouch of Prince Albert pipe tobacco.

So sometimes now, on a cool autumn eve, I sit out on the porch and watch the hawks soar over our valley and smoke my pipe. I think about what Charlie said about the folly of a civilization so blind it destroys the very Earth that gave it birth, that sustains it. "Can you picture that?" he'd laugh. I try to picture it but it's too painful. We can see the part, but we can't see the whole. But mostly what I picture is a sun-bronzed white bearded man, laughing for joy at the colored miracle of a fall woods.

Cliff Moore

The Prince Albert pipe smoke swirls up and away, merging with the cool air, up into the mystery of night, into oneness, giving no answers.

Freedom From the Need to be Special

MAX OLIVA

Adding the "prayer to be free" to his daily practice brought about major changes in his life.

A few years ago, while making my annual eight-day retreat, I came upon a form of prayer that has literally changed my life. I call it "Freedom-Prayer." It is a prayer that can result in a greater capacity to love and the ability to receive love; it offers deliverance from those obstacles within ourselves, aspects of the false self, that keeps us imprisoned.

The faith involved in freedom-prayer is like the faith of a child; it expresses a child's openness and trust. It is based on the belief that God truly loves us and knows what is best for us, that God wants us to be free and wants to heal us of anything that inhibits our inner freedom. Faith is a gift, but we grow in faith each time we put our trust in God's love. In the gospels, Jesus urges people to have faith and he praises those who do (Matthew 8:10-13). He also tells us in Mark's gospel:

> Have faith in God. I assure you that whoever tells this hill to get up and throw itself in the sea and does not doubt in his heart or hers, but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done. For this reason I tell you: When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for (Mark 11.22-24).

That "hill" may be fear, a resentment, or some other restriction on our freedom to live the kind of life that God wishes for us.

The best way to explain the freedom-prayer is to share how I discovered it and some of the ways I have since used it. I have applied this prayer to a variety of situations in my life: to interpersonal relationship, to my ministry, to combat fears, and even in situations where there is physical danger.

In the summer of 1982 I lived and worked among the economically poor in Tijuana, Mexico. I stayed at Casa de los Pobres, a multi-service

A Jesuit priest living in San Diego, CA, Max Oliva is the author of Praying the Beatitudes. *His article is excerpted from* Free to Pray—Free to Love, *@ 1994, by Ave Maria Press, Inc., Notre Dame, IN 46556. Used with permission. You may order a copy of the book by calling the publisher's toll free number: 800.282.1865.*

facility for those in need of food, clothing, and medical care in Tijuana. I came to know about the Casa through our Jesuit novices who live there for short periods as part of the novitiate training. However, that summer I was the only Jesuit at the Casa. While living there, I was constantly in touch with the loving people of the city. However, I discovered in myself certain prejudices toward Mexican people. During the summer two important things happened to me; I worked through the prejudices, becoming free of their hold on me, and, as a consequence of this healing, I fell in love with the people.

This experience of love was to lead me to one of the most difficult decisions of my life. For nine years I had been living at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, in the beautiful San Francisco Bay area which I dearly loved. Berkeley was heaven for me, so many dear friends in such a lovely setting. Following the summer in Tijuana, the thought occurred to me to move my residence from northern California to San Diego in order to continue my involvement in Tijuana on a part-time basis. I struggled with this since I knew few people in the San Diego area and did not relish leaving long-time, close friends in the Bay area. However, finally, with God's grace, I asked my provincial superior for permission to move. Awaiting his answer, I returned to Casa de los Pobres during Thanksgiving for a visit. There I encountered something unexpected in myself that greatly unsettled me.

On the one hand, it was wonderful to see people I had met during the summer once again, to play with the children, to joke with teenagers, to receive hugs from men and women who had become my friends. However, I found myself gradually withdrawing emotionally from them and I did not know why. When I returned to Berkeley, a sobering question plagued me: How can I move to San Diego in this new emotional state? Three weeks later the provincial phoned to give me permission to move! The following day I began my annual retreat, and it was on this retreat that I discovered the freedom-prayer.

I was meditating on the Annunciation when I began to see the cause of my emotional withdrawal from the people of Tijuana. I recalled that at Thanksgiving there were three novices at the Casa along with myself (they had been at the Casa for over a month). During the summer I had been the only Jesuit there. The novices had become friends with many of the same people I had met during the summer, and they were receiving the same kind of affection I had experienced. Not only that, but they were getting to know my favorite children! All of a sudden I realized the cause of my withdrawal—jealousy. The "pie of affection" which had

Kay Danielson

been all mine during the summer was now being split four ways! Another person might get angry when jealous, my response was to withdraw emotionally. It was a humiliating realization. It was at this point that my retreat director suggested that I pray for freedom from the need to be special. It is a request for humility, the kind of attitude that Mary had. I took the director's advice. Every time I felt the tendency to withdraw because of jealous feelings, I simply said the words, "I pray for freedom from the need to be special."

After the retreat was over and before I returned to Tijuana for another short visit, I discovered other incidents that triggered jealousy or urged me to be in the spotlight. It is amazing how a grace on a retreat can open one's eyes to a pattern of behavior! On each occasion, when these troublesome reactions made their appearance, I repeated the prayer I had learned on the retreat. Gradually, the tendency to feel jealous diminished. Back at Casa de los Pobres at Easter time, I had the opportunity to put this new prayer practice to the test. Once again there were novices there, different ones than before. I took the initiative this time and introduced them to my friends and eventually even to the child who was my favorite. I had been freed and could now share with others what had been abundantly given to me, and joyfully so.

As I practiced this form of prayer I began to realize that I wasn't praying never to be treated in a special way again. Over that we have no control. A key word in the prayer is "need," the *need* to be special. What is healed is the unfreedom. Thus one gradually becomes free and is at peace whether one is treated specially or not. One becomes detached from the compulsion. As a Zen Master states it, "The great way is not so difficult for those who have no preferences."

The Steps Involved in Freedom-Prayer

1. I become aware of an unfreedom or of an excessive need, a way in which I find myself acting or wanting to act, from my false self. Some examples of excessive needs: to be respected, praised, consulted, included, in control, ordered, perfect, thanked, always available, always at peace with everyone.
2. I realize I cannot become free of this aspect of my persona through my own efforts; I acknowledge that only God can free me.
3. I believe that God wants to heal me, wants me to be more like Jesus, more like Mary, more my true self—because God loves me.
4. I ask God for insight to know what it is that I need but am not receiving (or where I lack freedom). I try to *name* it. This is important for it heightens our self-knowledge and adds to our humility.
5. I ask God for freedom from the need that I have named, for example, the need to be special. I pray this phrase every time I find myself acting from the compulsion to experience that need or realize later that I have done so.
6. I leave the healing in God's hands, like a child, with complete trust that the freedom will be given to me. I go about life, leaving God to take care of the healing. Therefore, it is not necessary to repeat the prayer often during the day. I say it only at the time I discover I am acting from the unfreedom.

It is important not to doubt. If I am of two minds about what I am prying for, I can expect nothing (see James 1.6-8 and Mark 11.23). Beatrice Bruteau states this clearly in her insightful article, "The Prayer of Faith:"

> Believing in the present will produce effects in the future, provided one does not doubt. Doubting is vacillation in the expectation. Genuine consent means firmness in the expectation of future experience.

Alnita's Beatitudes

Blessed are those who know they need God, for they shall be met by God.

Blessed are those who are tormented by the tragedy of life, for they shall likewise appreciate the joy of life.

Blessed are those who are courteous and kind to all, for they shall be honored and loved all their lives.

Blessed are those with a passion to serve others and to serve God, for they shall be given their way of service.

Blessed are those who hold no resentments, for no one else can resent, begrudge, or hold malice towards them.

Blessed are those who know the one thing they want more than all the Earth, for they shall attain it.

Blessed are the mediators, the communicators, for they are the agents of God.

Blessed are those who must pay a high price for their truth, for they know the truth about themselves.

Alnita H. Dyall

"Alnita's Beatitudes" were taken from Witness to Wonder, @ *Word Service.*

Let Me Be Jew

Mourning by moonlight
the empty temple, Jew,
stay our destinies
until we love,

trip time and let
eternities leak through
and grow together great
under the Dove.

Stripped of symbols
the hungry hand
feeds only on flesh
touch on touch;

our flame needs flame;
the lone orison at night,
the shape of thirst
finds oh so little much.

Let me, too, be Jew,
rise in the dark, ashen
my face, sackcloth my skin.
mourn the emptiness within.

Herbert A. Kenny

A prominant poet and writer, widely acclaimed for his work in a number of genres, *Herbert A. Kenny resides with his wife, Teresa, in Manchester-by-the-sea, Massachusetts.*

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

It has become necessary for me to eliminate sugar from my diet due to serious health concerns. As a lover of sweets, the task of having to give them up seems impossible. Could you offer any thoughts on this issue or any helpful hints concerning a sugar-free life ahead?

Thank you,
Sweetie

Dear Sweetie,

Thank you for sharing this important topic with us all. I, just like you, have a couple of food attachments of my own, so I know exactly how you feel and what you're going through. Doesn't it feel like we were put on this planet to eat? Doesn't it sometimes seem like the meaning of life may just be that cookie or biscuit after all? It is not easy to give up something we have relied on, and that has been there for us in times of need like an old friend. The hardest part of the giving up besides the never-ever-again piece is the shock, anger, and disappointment we feel when we realize the truth: this friend has turned on us and is now our enemy. Once we deal with the horror of this truth, we can begin the process of learning to live without this substance we've grown to love and need. Letting go of an addiction provides us with an opportunity to choose either health or taste. It is an opportunity to examine the question, is it worth losing years of my life for cookies? For some, the answer may be, "Yes." Some souls may decide that they want to live with their addictions, even if they have less time to do so. Or, examining this question may lead to a turning-point in the lives of other souls who choose more time. Giving up our addictions gives us a chance to define what it means to take care of ourselves and how we show ourselves

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* * * * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

Paul M. Schrock

respect. Sometimes it is so easy to get confused. What does it mean to take care of yourself? What does it mean to be kind and generous to ourselves? Does that mean a whole package of cookies?

Recently I have been put on the Ageing Sage Diet. Suffice it to say, chicken and cheese-sauce are not on it. How am I coping? Not well. But I am managing. For me, it is helpful to not make any long-range changes in my menu plans. I do not make long-term commitments to healthier living. I take it one putter to the kitchen at a time. I do not think in terms of "never ever again" in connection to these foods I must now give up. In my ponderings, I try to remember the following truths: I am not here on earth just to eat chicken. I am here to love my beloveds and to inspire them to love me in return. Once I tried chicken and got impressed. I gave chicken a lot of power and authority in my life, which I am taking back. What I really want is my chest rubbed.

Like chicken, licking the macaroni-and-cheese sauce is sometimes about meanness, sometimes about simple self-destructiveness, or the quest for adventure. Stealing the cheese-sauce tin adds flavor to a ho-hum evening. Licking cheese-sauce is sometimes about honest hunger. Sometimes eating sweets is about stuffing some less-than-super-duper

feeling right back down where it came from—so we don't end up in an unsafe barking situation. Sometimes we nervous types eat sweets to calm down. Some quiet souls eat sweets to perk up. When letting go of a sweet addiction, some feelings may surface into a bark or growl. Allow yourself these necessary and sometimes rejuvenating noises.

Although I'm not sure what conclusions can be drawn, I will leave you with some observations I've made from my own life in dealing with my chicken and cheese dependencies. When I am out following my nose sniffing the fresh air, I have no cravings for chicken or cheese. When I'm nestled next to my best buddy in the middle of the same shared snooze, I do not experience any food longings. When there is no scent of chicken or cheese-sauce in the house, I am without need.

When I am quiet, calm, collected, and connected to a beloved and my spirit of adventure has been exercised, my food dependencies diminish.

I leave you now with Angela's twelve steps to a sweeter life:

1. Offer up a little peace prayer
2. Share a deep snooze
3. Twirl enthusiastically
4. Putter playfully
5. Cuddle frequently
6. Sniff fervently
7. Forgive regularly and completely
8. Chase squirrels often
9. Make all noises (even growls) joyfully
10. Share Cheerios generously
11. Be of use
12. Trot on with hope.

I hope I have been of some help to all those like me who are struggling with their dependencies.

Faithfully,
Angela

Ask Angela *is now available in book form. To order your copy, call the publisher's toll-free number: 800-937-5557.*

Coming to Terms With Another's Pain

SHANNON FRIESEN

A simple invitation for coffee "ended in years of soul-searching."

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" to the Editor, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. You need not be a professional writer. Just describe a spiritual experience that made a difference in your life or in someone else's life.

Olga became my first handicapped friend. I was 20 when we met; my dreams were beginning to take shape and it felt like the world was at my fingertips.

Death and illness, luckily, never played a big part in my life.

We met at the television store where I worked in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Olga came to pick up her repaired set and patiently waited for the Handi-Transit. My boss signalled me to keep her company after he pushed Olga's wheelchair into the back of the shop.

After a pleasant and lengthy chat we discovered that our downtown apartments were only two streets apart. Before she left I asked if she'd like to have coffee some time and she eagerly gave me her phone number.

"Just let the phone ring lots because it takes me ages to get to it."

Even simple communication was an arduous struggle—Olga's face muscles twisted, making her speech slurred and painfully slow.

Although confined to a chair with cerebral palsy and other various maladies, Olga's cheerfulness and optimistic outlook on life amazed me. I assumed people imprisoned in their own malfunctioning bodies must be bitter. Since I had experienced only good health throughout my life, I couldn't imagine how I'd deal with a handicap.

My invitation for coffee was genuine and I liked her from the start. Admittedly, my curiosity was piqued since she wasn't like any of my other friends.

On the contrary, I soon realized she was *exactly* like them. Olga merely had a much different set of circumstances and she made no apologies.

Shannon Friesen is a freelance writer in Vancouver, British Columbia.

She turned out to be a generous and appreciative friend. The close proximity of our apartments made visits easy. Olga's social assistance barely kept her afloat but she never asked me for money. Although I couldn't contribute much, she did accept my groceries and lunch outings.

Her T.V. was a constant and much-needed companion. Since she rarely read, because of poor eyesight, television provided contact with the outside world. I came to the conclusion the "tube" filled most of her day because she seldom spoke of other visitors or social functions.

After each visit I was happy about our friendship but confused about her illness. Except for a bit of companionship, I was helpless in relieving her physical problems. Many, many nights I stayed awake and questioned fate. Why her? Why not me? What if I become sick and disabled?

As the months passed Olga shared more of her story with me. Her early years were full of heartache. Olga came from a small and unloving family that soon grew tired of coping with her special needs. In her adolescent years the family placed her in an institution for the mentally retarded. Since she still had her mobility when young (as well as normal intelligence), the staff burdened her with a heavy work load and often took advantage of her good nature. Olga spent several hopeless and miserable years surrounded by people with very different needs.

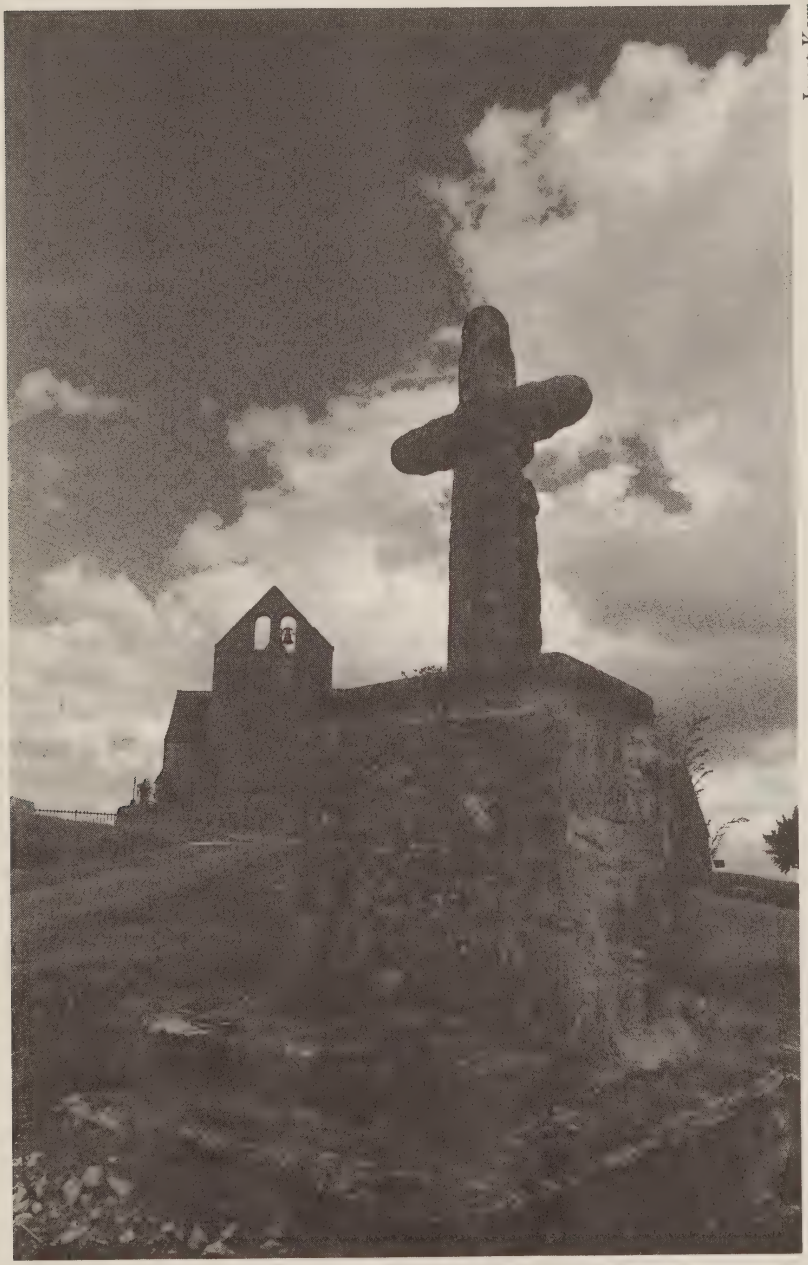
Her situation improved the day a new nurse joined the staff. The nurse recognized Olga since they both lived in the same neighborhood. She was horrified to find Olga in the institution and eventually found her a more suitable and loving environment.

As an adult Olga proudly remained independent for as long as she could. She rented an apartment and enjoyed her freedom. This lifestyle changed dramatically the day a man broke into her apartment. The rape and physical assault caused injuries that forced her into a wheelchair.

After spending many years in a chair Olga's circulation worsened and her foot was amputated (I always noticed big sores on her legs that took months to heal). A few years later her doctor diagnosed serious heart problems; her existence was marred with one debilitating condition after another. Once I directly asked Olga if she ever gave up hope, if she ever just wanted to give up on life.

"My friend," she slurred, "I stopped feeling bitter a long time ago. What does it help? Now I've learned to accept my fate and feel fortunate for the good days, the days without pain."

A turning point for Olga came the day she met Frank. He was closer



Janet Kerr

to her age, and his former wife also suffered from disabilities. Frank seemed quite comfortable in coping with Olga's extra needs. They met at the hospital, which proves that love and friendship can be found anywhere!

I felt relieved when Frank walked into Olga's life since work took up more and more of my time. Happily, Frank quickly became her loyal and constant companion.

He had a paper route and Olga accompanied him each day, holding the stack of papers while he pushed her chair. As the weather turned colder he found a job with a laundromat and took Olga with him to every shift.

When my company transferred me to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, I was grateful for Frank's involvement. In the previous few months Olga had grown weaker, and various medications upset her digestion. She needed a lot of attention and Frank was always there for her.

As I said goodbye she grimaced with chest pain but tried to smile. Olga gripped my arm and wished me all the happiness that life could offer.

While in Prince Albert I kept in touch and was pleased to hear that their relationship continued to blossom. They lived together now but kept this a secret lest he jeopardize her social assistance.

A year later I returned to Winnipeg and shortly after, Frank rushed her to hospital. Olga's heart condition became critical and she spent several days in Intensive Care. Frank begged me to visit but I selfishly procrastinated. I simply couldn't bear to see her sicker than usual. Irrational as it sounds, I felt guilty for being healthy.

Finally, I summoned the courage to visit. She moaned and thrashed in a fitful sleep. I stared for what seemed an eternity, debating whether or not to waken her. Deciding not to, I left my flowers and a note promising to return the next morning. Frank phoned me that evening; he said Olga was so disappointed that I didn't waken her, because she really wanted to talk.

I never had another chance. Olga died that night.

At her funeral Olga looked lovely to me for the first time. Only in death was she free from the uncontrollable jerking and straining. Her face looked relaxed and serene. Consequently, I felt calm and almost peaceful—Olga's suffering was over.

Over a decade has passed since my friend died but I've never forgotten her. What started as a simple invitation for coffee ended in years of

soul-searching. I felt a great deal of inner turmoil—why is life so generous to some and wretched to others? I've grown to realize that life is a combination of many things. I obviously was aware of human suffering before meeting Olga but since it was indirect it was easy to avoid. when suffering afflicts a dear friend, it becomes another issue.

From Olga I learned to relish happy moments, big or small, and to live each day as if it's a special gift. Witnessing so much pain made me appreciate my health and independence.

Even throughout her daily struggles Olga respected life and loved people. She never asked for my sympathy and didn't want my pity. Perhaps I'll never have all the answers but now life's trials seem easier to accept. She may never know how much her strength affected my outlook on life.

MOVING?

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for you

come and meet him as an old friend,
out of town for years, and now returned,
bringing youthful faith that dreamed
of service together, useful with lasting
meanings under sky opened to full blue.
your brother come back to share
your most complete, eternal days.
Charles Rampp

silence in june

at last the hour when I can put down
all the burdens I carried, let go of weak hands
held for strength, for being-there, stop
all the flow of Words in your stead and name,
and let the deeds of faith hang loose
and empty as dry husks of corn picked clean.
now We can sit in the great steel chairs
in near-midnight's still cooling darkness
and enjoy each other, unbroken by duties
and free of promises—here tiredness
of spirit never wearies relaxing minds
waiting for the first full moon this month,
trusting grace beyond almanac pages.
Charles Rampp

protection

back and forth waves of reversing meanings
chop over us. but we are rocks, confident,
not to be fragmented and cement-packed
conglomerately with other scraps—
not for millennia to come.
We hold this barrier beach of belief,
protecting a fragile shoreline.
Charles Rampp

Torch Song

"They are burning their own communities, their own homes."
TV Reporter, L.A. riots, May 1992

1. He holds a torch to his despair.
   in this dream,
   he is burning the cotton fields,
   torching this day
   and the next.
2. In Asia, they burn their rice fields
   when a tidal wave threatens the land.

   In America, they burn good ground
   to prevent wilderness fires from
   spreading.

   In Africa, the home of fire,
   they burn to purify.
3. Spent,
   he puts on sackcloth-
   sits in the ashes.
   "Lord" he says,
   "Here I am again."
   Suleiman R. Grosslight

*Sister Thea Bowman Comes to the Cathedral**

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for God has anointed me.
God has sent me to bring good news to the poor.
Luke 4.18

gospel as po'as hungry women and chil'en
backwoods folks
hillbilly
cotton pickin'
came to the cathedral
gospel went dancing in the aisles
po' as po' can get
"give me that old time religion" gospel
po' as the hungry in her eyes came

"we is all God's chil'en"

good news

nothin' but good news
for po' folks

like us

Lou Ella Hickman

*A teacher, lecturer, dancer and singer, Sister Thea Bowman (1937-1990) promoted joy in the gospel and pride in black culture in a captivating way. CBS correspondent Mike Wallace wrote of her, "I don't remember when I've been more moved, more enchanted by a person whom I've profiled, than by Sr. Thea Bowman." You may read about her in *Sister Thea Bowman, Shooting Star*, Celestine Cepress, Ed. St. Mary's Press, Winoma, MN. To order the book, call the publisher's toll-free number, 800.533.8095.

A minister serving three churches in Maryland, a poet and a former college teacher, Charles Rampp has published over 500 poems.
Suleiman Grosslight is a minister and guide in the Sufi order. He was born into a Jewish family, raised as a Christian Scientist, and became a Sufi 15 years ago at age 55.
Lou Ella Hickman, a writer and Roman Catholic nun, resides in Corpus Christi, Tx.

The Creative Void

RICHARD BOEKE

The pastor of a vibrant Unitarian Church sustains his relationship to the holy through a daily spiritual practice.

Father Dan O'Hanlon, a mystic and teacher at Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, who was killed in an auto accident in 1992, helped me to learn what prayer is. He spoke about "the technology of spirituality," the importance of daily practice. Dan had us keep a record of our daily practice and turn it in to him each week. That was the "homework": To actually use our own spiritual life as a laboratory. To discover for ourselves the relationship between spiritual practice and daily life. As Emerson put it, to "acquaint ourselves firsthand with Deity."

Dan O'Hanlon—like Huston—exemplified a way of prayer and an inclusive thinking that is not just Christian, but which is nourished by the spiritual food of all cultures. They have been willing to cross the narrow bridge that leads from "talk about God" to "encounter with God," teaching that real religion is not found in books, but in daily prayer and meditation.

Yesterday, nine men met in the Fireside Room of our church. One man opened by saying, "Males have become the last safe object of prejudice in our society." We discussed the loneliness, the isolation of being male. We discussed the loss of hope and the problem of suicide, then agreed to meet monthly as a "bank of brothers." Someone recalled some famous words of the theologian Paul Tillich: "The Courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."

Who is the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt?" The God above God. The "*UrGod*" of Jacob Boeme.

What does it mean to talk of God? Is God just a wish projected on the universe? Was Karl Marx right when he said that "religion is the opiate of the people"? Do the ontological, cosmological and teleological argu-

A prominent interfaith leader, Richard Boeke is pastor of First Unitarian Church of Berkeley in Kensington, CA.

*Huston Smith is the author of the religious classic, *The Religions of Man—Ed.*

Janet Gnall

ments for the existence of God tell us who God is? Aren't these arguments all shattered on bloody battlefields or by a nine-year old boy with a gun?

The words in arguments are efforts to avoid the real God. They are efforts to avoid "the creative void." They are "creative avoidance," a way to refuse the agony of real spiritual encounter.

Dan O'Hanlon used to quote Guigo, a 12th century teacher who tells of four stages of spiritual practice: *Reading*: an exercise of the outward senses. *Meditation*: inward understanding. *Prayer*: desire. *Contemplation*: the whole soul attending to God.

Dan also said:

> The first step in drawing close to the mystical darkness and beginning to communicate with God through the heart is to find some means for silencing the mind. . . . The mind demands something to fasten on . . . Is it necessary then to concentrate on something religious? Why not a leaf, or a spot on the floor? In fact, concentrating on the breathing or on the body sensations can bring about contemplation in the strict sense of the word: communication of the Heart directly with God in the luminous darkness.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I would put it another way: All nature, including our bodies, is a revelation of the holy. By spiritual practice focusing on any part of nature, we can discover our relationship to the holy. At first, we may be afraid of the state of "wordlessness." But silence becomes friendly, eventually. For a moment, or for an hour, we know the wonder of "the Creative Void."

In the meeting of our men's group, we discussed the importance of changing one's life in order to move out of depression. When you face the void, it is necessary to give up some part of your self-image. As the New Testament puts it, "You must lose your life in order to save it."

So the Buddhists in the *Paramita Sutra* chant, "*Gatte Gatte*, *haragate*," "Go through the Gate, Go through the Gate." And in the concentration camp, the survivors chanted, "All the world is just a narrow bridge, just a narrow bridge, just a narrow bridge."

May we all find a spiritual practice by which we pass through the Gate and over the Bridge.

"I Treasure Your Word in My Heart"

ROBERT A. RAINES

I was rummaging around in Psalm 119 one morning, delighting in the trove of nourishing phrases: "Let your steadfast love become my comfort . . . turn to me and be gracious to me as is your custom towards those who love your name . . . I treasure your word in my heart" I spoke those last words aloud, tasted them, heard them, felt them sink into my heart.

Memories flooded in of scripture and hymn verses learned by heart as a child in a Methodist minister's household. Phillip Roth writes in his book *Patrimony* that his father gave him the vernacular, the street language of Newark in the 1930's. My father gave me the Bible, the faith language of Minneapolis in the 1930's. We had family devotions each day—taking turns reading scripture and praying, singing hymns and learning our favorites by heart: "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Love Divine" and many others.

One summer when I was eight or nine my father proposed a deal whereby my brother Dick and I agreed to learn a psalm in the morning in return for a bottle of soda pop in the afternoon. It being a hot summer, we learned a lot of psalms, all in the King James version, of course. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me . . . O Lord Thou has searched me and known me." While the quid pro quo pedagogy may be problematic, I am glad for all these words hidden in my heart, words which have been there for me in time of despair, joy or sorrow. Our efforts at family prayer with our own children were less effective, though in and out of church over the years they have come to love the great hymns.

Now and then I need to amend or add on to the psalmist's words: "Behold (the One) who keeps Israel (and the Palestinians) will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121), and again, "Sons (and daughters) are indeed a heritage from the Lord" (Ps 127). Indeed when we pray the Lord's Prayer in our office staff meetings, we pray, "Our Mother/Father

A poet, author and former parish pastor, Robert A. Raines is Director of Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center in Bangor, PA. His article is reprinted with permission from the Ridgeleaf, *an occasional publication of Kirkridge.*

Cliff Moore

who art in heaven . . ." Textural purity yields to religious probity. Original intent is transcended by new truth into which the Spirit is guiding us.

Who can estimate the value of a few faith-filled words living in the heart? A little child does, in fact, sometimes lead us. Once, on a retreat at Kirkridge, a woman who is engaged in peace and justice work told of the first time she asked her three-year-old son Sasha if he would like to say grace at dinner. He nodded, bowed his head and prayed, "No guns, no swords, no grabbing toys." Sasha knows.

Who can estimate the value of a few faith-filled words living in the heart?

Our old ones often teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Bessie Adams was 94 when she died. As one of her pastors, I visited her at home in her later years and learned how she coped when she woke at night and couldn't get back to sleep. She would start repeating verses of scripture beginning with the letter A, then B, and so on through the alphabet until she fell asleep. She practiced the ABC's of scripture. In her own way she took the word of the psalmist to heart: "I remember your name in the night, O Lord." (Ps. 119). Bessie knew.

Words that bless, heal, illumine and encourage us become holy in our hearts.

O Lord,
I treasure your word in my heart.

Rock Ritual XVII: Everything Prays

ROBERT O'ROURKE

Caterpillars, pinetrees, and grandfather rocks turn worry into hope.

Prayer is difficult for me. Bewildering. Perplexing whenever I contemplate

suffering human-kind throughout the world,
blackened earth rain forests in South America,
remnants of animals marked "endangered," everywhere.

How do I pray for these? The extent and scope overwhelms me. Alone, in anguish, I cry . . .

Dear God, humanity!
God, the forests!
God, the animals!

Except for these simple exclamations I just do not know any other way to pray. I have always believed I should pray as if everything depended on God, work as if everything depended on me. So, after my intercessions, I support human causes, environmental concerns, animal rights. But I wonder

What else?
What about God?
Persistence?
Divine Intervention?
Acceptance?

Then I read, "Perhaps EVERYTHING prays—not only humans." The whole earth: rocks-rivers-trees. Creatures of the earth: butterflies-birds-buffalo. Even the vast beyond: stars-sun-galaxies. Ah! I take comfort in the thought: a universe at prayer. Yes! Hope!

Today I set out to experience "everything praying." I touch my Lakota *Tankashila* (grandfather) rocks representing earth's four sacred di-

A writer and poet, Bob O'Rourke resides in Colorado. The illustration accompanying his article is by the Colorado artist, Lisa Smith.

Lisa Smith

rections. From the rocks I learn the attitude of prayer. Solitude. A purple finch sings her psalms in a pine tree. Her gift. Thankfulness. A tiny caterpillar symbolizes: Humility. Flower buds express: Hope. Sunshine sparkles: Faith. Natures confirms with hallelujahs the words once recorded, "All things work together for good for those who love God."

Tomorrow may again bring murmurs of uncertainty but today I know I shall continue to return for Nature's instruction in prayer. I am not alone. Everything prays. O God.

GRATEFULNESS, THE HEART OF PRAYER: AN APPROACH TO LIFE IN FULLNESS

by Brother David Steindl-Rast, Paulist Press, New York, 1993, 224 pages, paperback, $9.95.

"To bless whatever there is, and for no other reason but simply because it is, that is what we are made for as human beings," says Brother David in this enriching and enlightening little book. Simply written and free from religious jargon, Brother David celebrates a life of fullness characterized by an attitude of prayerfulness; the child-like ability to "look with the eyes of the heart," full of wonderment and fully concentrated, at whatever is given us to do or see or hear at *this* moment. "Gratefulness is the heart's full response to the gratuitousness of all that exists."

Every time we re-connect with and act out of this attitude of prayerfulness and gratitude, we are indeed, Brother David tells us, following the scriptural counsel to pray without ceasing. *PW*

PRAYERS FOR PUPPIES, AGING AUTOS, AND SLEEPLESS NIGHTS: GOD LISTENS TO IT ALL

by Robert Jones, Westminster/John Knox press, Louisville, KY, 1990, 96 pages, paperback, $16.00.

A Presbyterian minister who teaches preaching at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA, Robert Jones has written a charming set of "prayers for the daily grind." Like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, he engages God in conversation during the most routine tasks of daily life, and his faith remains as constant in painful experience as in happiness.

Prayers "For Rendering to the IRS," "For a Three-Foot Putt," "For a Middle-Aged Body," "For Going on a Diet," "For a Party" and many others bring the reader a smile of real delight. With other subjects—such as divorce, visiting a dying friend, being in the desert—Jones explores places of fear and sorrow and emptiness, always remaining in dialogue with God, affirming at every step that God is with him— and with all of us. *MFG*

ENCOUNTERING GOD: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY FROM BOZEMAN TO BENARES

by Diana L. Eck, Beacon Press, Boston, 1993, 259 pages, $24.00.

A professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University, Diana Eck has written a fascinating story of her ongoing expe-

riences and relationships with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs and Native Americans. Without the aridity of most studies of comparative religions, she reflects on the spiritual questions that all of us face in our search for understanding of the ultimate reality: Who is God? Is there a God? Is only one religion true? How are we to pray? What are we to believe in this world of inexplicable suffering and death?

Writing as a believing Christian, Eck tells us how her work with people of other faiths has helped her to think about such questions and deepened her own faith. "In the give and take of dialogue," she writes, "understanding one another leads to mutual self-understanding and finally to mutual transformation." Thoughtful, provocative and spiritually enriching, this is an important book. *PW*

SOULMATES: HONORING THE MYSTERIES OF LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP

by Thomas Moore, Harper Collins, NY, NY, 1994, 267 pages, $25.

The author of the national bestseller, *Care of the Soul*, Thomas Moore believes that "engagement with the soul" may be the whole point of human life. If we were more responsive to the people whom fate has placed in our lives, he writes, seeing our spouse or friend "poetically," supporting the other's inner reality, nurturing the relationship with exposure to the arts, we would soon reap the rewards of the soulful life.

The relationship of "soulmates" (people who feel deeply connected to one another), is intimate, often shadowy, and by no means always a pleasure, but it can last a lifetime—and happily, any relationship can be transformed into a "soulful" one.

Although Moore succumbs occasionally to romantic, vague thinking, his ideas might help us recover the lost art of conversation and live more fully in the Spirit which is not only within us, but also among us. Let us hope that he places the word "soul" on the bestseller list again. *MFG*

We welcome your comments. Please write to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

I believe that deep in peoples' hearts is a longing for respect and love, and *Fellowship in Prayer*, by its representation of all the world's religions, serves beautifully as an example of this respect and love.

My spirit is soothed by the writings of the mystics and by your publication. It really feels like a balm for the soul. I sincerely believe that your work is a vital service for humanity, because between the lines of your pages, by your unspoken example, you are teaching people to get beyond "camps" to what is essential—God's tolerant love, incarnated in our own souls and in all creation.

Barbara St. John; Brooklyn, NY

[The writer is a singer and songwriter who composes—especially for young people—"songs celebrating simplicity, spiritual emergence, cultural diversity, non-violence, animals and nature."—*Ed.*]

I am writing to request prayers for Kenya. Kenya is a God-fearing nation with churches scattered all over the country. The churches have been constructed on our famous *Marambee*, a self-help motto, and everyone contributes as generously as they can.

Recently, high inflation has hit Kenya very hard, making the people poorer and poorer.

May God guide you to help us in any way you can.

Wilfred F.M. Karia; Box 30040, Nairobi, Kenya

Thank you for your efforts to bring inspiration to this morally declining world.

Tim Carper; Grayson, KY

Not only does your publication teach me about others, but it has also taught me a lot about myself. The stories and experiences help me to see things in a new light, and I find that refreshing. I read every issue from cover to cover, and always at the end of my reading, I feel a sense of calm and peace.

Corrine DeWinter; Springfield, MA

I am sending you a poem written by my granddaughter, Lauren Miller. She is 12-years-old and lives in Rhode Island.

MY FUTURE
Someone is crying
Can't you see?
She's crying because
there's not much to see.
Except trash and pollution,
but no one cares.
They're throwing away
My future.
The future I want.
Do you see who is crying?
It's your Mother Earth.

It is such a good feeling to know you are out there promoting the practice of prayer. God bless you.

A. Kopatch; Perryville, MD

Thank you for the wonderful gift of a subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer*. It will be, I am sure, a rich, year-long gift, renewing my spirit and bringing your treasures of love and deep spirituality to my work in Uganda. I serve as a religious education advisor, sponsor prayer groups, shepherd pastoral workers, and do counseling sessions. So you see, your "treasuries" will be well used.

Sr. Leonella, CSC; Ft. Portal, Uganda

I loved your article, *An Easter Contemplation,* in your April 1994 issue. A am very interested in contacting Beatrice Brutean at *Schola Comtemplation*. I am actively involved in the practice of contemplative prayer/self emptying into God's will and would like to know more about this group.

Mary Nicol; Dallas, TX

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on 8½ by 11 inch paper, on a 5¼ inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, or 2S/HD, or on 3½ HD microdisks, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Please include a brief biography.

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